

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SSC-01 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00

PC-01 /089 W

-----119665 090518Z /10

R 081117Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1052

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABERONE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LILONGWE 1073

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MI

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT DISSOLVED BY PRESIDENTIAL ORDER

1. UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 49 OF THE CONSTITUTION, PRESIDENT BANDA AT NOON YESTERDAY, JULY 7, BY RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT DECLARED THE GOVERNMENT DISSOLVED AND ALL MINISTERS, MEMBERS OF THE MALAWI CONGRESS PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, DEPUTY MINISTERS AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES ARE DISMISSED. HE INDICATED THAT HE WOULD NAME A NEW GOVERNMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND MEANWHILE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS WOULD REST WITH THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT.

2. COMMENT: THE ANNOUNCEMENT CAME AS A COMPLETE SURPRISE TO VIRTUALLY EVERYONE. IT FOLLOWED THREE DAYS OF INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS IN BLANTYRE INCLUDING A PROGRAM AT THE STADIUM JULY 6 WHICH KEPT US SEATED THERE FROM 10:00 UNTIL 2030. THURSDAY, JULY 7, WAS ALSO AN OFFICIAL HOLIDAY.
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3. UPON HEARING THE REPORT, I CALLED THE SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENCY, JOHN NGWIRI, AND ASKED HIM IF HE COULD TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT IT. TO MY SURPRISE HE LAUGHED AND AFFABLY INVITED ME TO COME TO HIS HOME AND TALK WITH HIM. UPON ARRIVAL I FOUND HIM TOGETHER WITH A FRIEND AND BOTH WELL STONED. HE DISAPPEARED FOR 20 MINUTES AND RETURNED WEAVING

BUT IN FULL CONTROL OF HIS MENTAL FACULTIES. HE
EXPAINED THAT HE HAD BEEN PARTYING MOST OF THE DAY
CELEBRATING THE END OF THE OFFICIAL PROGRAM FOR WHICH,
OF COURSE, HE HAD A GOOD DEAL OF RESPONSIBILITY. HE SAID
WE SHOULD NOT READ TOO MUCH INTO THE PRESIDENT'S ACTION;
THAT HE OBVIOUSLY WANTED TO MAKE CERTAIN CHANGES: THAT IT
WAS EASIER JUST TO CLEAR THE DECKS AND START FROM
SCRATCH AND THAT HE HAD JUST BEEN CALLED TO RETURN TO
BLANTYRE IN THE MORNING (JULY 8) TO SEE THE PRESIDENT AT
WHICH TIME HE EXPECTS (HE IS NOT SURE) TO BE GIVEN THE
NAMES OF THE NEW MINISTERS WITH AN OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT
TO COME ON MONDAY JULY 11. WITH A LAUGH HE REMARKED THAT,
OF COURSE, HE MIGHT BE OUT OF A JOB HIMSELF. HE EXPECTS
THAT MOST OF THE FORMER MINISTERS WILL BE RE-APPOINTED BUT
REFUSED TO SPECULATE ON THE ONES TO BE DROPPED.

4. EVER SINCE FORMER PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL MUWALO WAS
ARRESTED, CONVICTED OF TREASON, AND SENTENCED TO DEATH,
THERE HAS BEEN RUMOR AND SPECULATION THAT IF THE CHARGES
ARE TRUE (WHICH WE DOUBT) OTHERS MUST HAVE BEEN INVOLVED.
CERTAINLY OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS AND MINISTERS WERE CLOSE TO
MUWALO, AMONG THEM NGWIRI HIMSELF AND MINISTER CHAKUAMBA
PHIRI OF YOUTH AND CULTURE. BANDA IS AN EXPERT AT CONCEALING
HIS THOUGHTS AND INTENTIONS AND UNDOUBTEDLY THIS WAS A
CAREFULLY PLANNED MOVE. NGWIRI CLEARLY DID KNOW IT WAS
COMING AND WITH HINDSIGHT, TOGETHER WITH MOST OF MY
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DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES, IT DID SEEM TO US THAT THE MINISTERS
ATTENDING THE STATE BANQUET, THE BALL AND THE STADIUM SHOW
WERE UNUSUALLY SUBDUED THIS YEAR. WE THINK THEY MUST
HAVE HAD WIND OF THE MOVE AND WERE TRYING TO ASSESS THEIR
FUTURES. IN ANSWER TO MQ QUESTION, NGWIRI DID ADMIT THAT
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME BANDA HAS TAKEN SUCH DRASTIC ACTION
IN THE PROCESS OF RESHUFFLING AND REFORMING HIS GOVERNMENT.

STEVENSON

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, PERSONNEL SEPARATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 08-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LILONG01073
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770244-0464
Format: TEL
From: LILONGWE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770778/aaaacpwl.tel
Line Count: 103
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 13dc146f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1923805
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOVERNMENT DISSOLVED BY PRESIDENTIAL ORDER
TAGS: PINT, MI, (BANDA, H KAMUZU)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/13dc146f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009